

## Writing Arguments to Support Claims in Social Studies Grades 9-12

An argument is a "claim" that must be supported by evidence. When writing argument, students are required to do more than summarize material or repeat what has already been said. One strategy for advancing an argument is to anticipate and address counterarguments or oppositions. By developing counterclaims, the writer discredits the counter argument and thereby invalidates reasons the reader might have for not accepting the writer's argument.

### Argument Writing

- Introduces claim(s) about a topic or issue acknowledge and distinguishes the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organizes the reasons and evidence logically.
- Supports claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.
- Uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
- Establishes and maintains a formal style.
- Provides a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.

### Types of Evidence

Evidence types include facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or an analysis and that can be evaluated by others; should appear in a form and be derived from a source widely accepted as appropriate to a particular discipline, as in details or quotations from a text in the study of literature and experimental results in the study of science.

### Critical Reading

Critical reading is a major part of understanding argument. Readers must do *more* than read material. Critical reading requires the reader to interact with the text, questioning and examining what the author is saying.

### Related Vocabulary

**Analyze** means to examine, closely study, and evaluate a text by breaking down and examining its elements to comprehend its meaning.

**Bias** is a general tendency or leaning in one direction; a partiality toward one view over another.

**Claim** is a statement that clearly introduces an idea or belief that is supported by evidence.

**Counterclaim/opposing claim** is an argument that negates the writer's claim.

**Data** is information that is accepted as being true—facts, figures, and examples—and from which conclusions can be drawn.

**Formal style** is writing that is free of slang, trite expressions, abbreviations, symbols, email shortcut language, contractions, and the use of the personal pronoun "I." The writer does not speak directly to the reader by using the word *you*. Formal style ensures that readers are able to read and understand what is written.

**Organization patterns** are structures that show the relationship between ideas. Types of organizational patterns include *Cause and Effect* and *Problem/Solution*.

**Peripheral information** is text information that is not of central importance.

**Primary source** is an original source, such as someone's diary or journal, a survey or interview, letters, autobiographies, and observation.

**Secondary source** is material that other people have gathered and interpreted, extended, analyzed, or evaluated, such as newspaper articles, a documentary on television, a website, a science text, and an encyclopedia entry.

**Synthesize** means to examine, closely study, and evaluate how individual text elements work together as a whole by combining the knowledge of one text element to the analysis of an additional element.

**Tone** is an author's attitude toward a subject.

*"Argument literacy is fundamental to being educated..." Gerald Graff, 2003 (Common Core, Appendix A)*

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History Labs, Historical Investigations, and Document Based Questions are excellent examples of instruction that enables students to “write arguments focused on discipline specific content.” In the process of completing these assignments, students make sound claims based on evidence cited in documents.

### Examples:

**Essential Question:** The Black Death: How Different Were Christian and Muslim Responses?

**Sample Student Claim:** *The Muslim response to the Black Death was superior to the Christian response because of advancements in science and education in the Arab world as compared to Europe.*

**Essential Question:** Was the New Deal a Good Deal for Americans?

**Sample Student Claim1:** *The New Deal was a bad deal because it did little to help the average American. About 15 percent of the nation's workers were still unemployed in 1940. The Great Depression did not end in the U.S. until 1942, after the country had entered World War II.*

**Sample Student Claim 2:** *The New Deal was a mixed deal for Americans. While it gave jobs and rights to workers, protected consumers, and provided security for retired workers, the U.S. had a delayed emergence from the Great Depression because of political opposition to Roosevelt's policies.*

**Essential Question:** What was the greatest underlying cause to World War I?

**Sample Student Claim:** *The Industrial Revolution ultimately led to WWI. It gave nations abilities to create vast armies. It created the need for new markets. The Industrial revolution stirred up nationalism and competition. The fact that some nations industrialized and others didn't created an unequal balance of power causing entangling alliances.*

### Historical Thinking Skills\*

#### Sourcing (Bias)

- *What is the author's point of view?*
- *Why was it written?*
- *When was it written?*
- *Is this source believable? Why? Why not?*

#### Contextualizing

- *What else was going on at the time this was written?*
- *What was it like to be alive at this time?*
- *What things were different back then?*
- *What things were the same?*

#### Corroborating

- *What do other pieces of evidence say?*
- *Am I finding different versions of the story? Why or why not?*
- *What pieces of evidence are most believable?*

#### Close Reading (Critical Reading)

- *What claims does the author make?*
- *What evidence does the author use to support those claims?*
- *How is this document make me feel?*
- *What words or phrases does the author use to convince me that he/she is right?*
- *What information does the author leave out?*

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